

*Gwyneth Walker*

# ***TESTIMONY***

*for Amnesty International*



## PROGRAM NOTES

TESTIMONY, scored for piano and readers, was composed as a tribute to Amnesty International USA. The readings are adapted from letters by and about the prisoners of conscience with whom Amnesty is concerned. The music which surrounds the readings is derived from the spiritual, "Go Down Moses" -- especially the final refrain 'let my people go.'

The work opens with a statement of "Go Down Moses." Readings of letters are then interspersed with variations of the song. Each variation is a musical reflection upon the reading which precedes it.

The final section presents the reading of a letter from a Soviet prisoner confined against his will in a psychiatric hospital. During this reading, the pianist plays reiterations of the 5-note rhythmic pattern 'let my people go' -- on the keys, strings and body of the piano. As this rhythmic activity increases, the song "Go Down Moses" reappears and is sung by the readers.

TESTIMONY was commissioned by the pianists Samuel and Nancy Bent of Hanover, New Hampshire. The work was specifically intended for performance on a benefit concert for Amnesty International on October 4, 1987 in Rollins Chapel on the Dartmouth College Campus.

## PERFORMANCE NOTES

TESTIMONY is a somber and dramatic work for pianist and readers. Although the work may be performed with a minimum of two readers, it is recommended that several (six or more) readers participate.

It is intended for performance by school, church or community groups. The ability to read music is not required of the readers. However, it is recommended that at least some of the readers be able to sing (see pp. 18-19).

The readers should sit or stand at the side of the stage, coming forward to center stage when reading, returning to the side after reading.

The style of reading of the first five readings should be natural and straightforward, in the manner in which you or I might read these passages aloud to ourselves. Any instinctive shadings of shock, revulsion, tenderness, etc. are appropriate. Highly dramatic reading is not.

The final reading (p. 15) is that of an actual letter from a prisoner of conscience. The reader should be a man of approximately 30 years of age who can project an identification with the writer of the letter. This is a dramatic reading.

The pianist should play the music strictly as written. The interaction between pianist and readers is expressed musically, not through overt contact. The pianist is not a 'prisoner,' yet the music he/she plays speaks for the prisoners and for our anger at unjust and inhumane imprisonment. Only in the final gesture (p. 20) does the pianist also become a prisoner.

*This work is dedicated to prisoners of conscience  
held against their wills  
throughout the world*

---

# "LET MY PEOPLE GO"

$\text{♩} = 80$

slowly, somberly

The musical score is written on ten systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor). The score includes various performance instructions and dynamics:

- System 1:** Treble clef starts with a whole note chord. Bass clef has a half note chord. Dynamics: *pp*. Pedal markings: *Ped. I + Soft Ped. stay down*, *sva*, *loco*.
- System 2:** Treble clef has a half note chord. Bass clef has a half note chord. Dynamics: *cresc ...*.
- System 3:** Treble clef has a half note chord. Bass clef has a half note chord. Dynamics: *mf*, *cresc ...*, *f*. Pedal markings: *soft Ped. stay down*, *Ped. I up \**, *Ped. \**, *Ped. \**, *rit ... ? a tempo*.
- System 4:** Treble clef has a half note chord. Bass clef has a half note chord. Dynamics: *f*, *vol.*, *sva*.
- System 5:** Treble clef has a half note chord. Bass clef has a half note chord. Dynamics: *f*, *vol.*, *sva*.
- System 6:** Treble clef has a half note chord. Bass clef has a half note chord. Dynamics: *f*, *vol.*, *sva*.
- System 7:** Treble clef has a half note chord. Bass clef has a half note chord. Dynamics: *f*, *vol.*, *sva*.
- System 8:** Treble clef has a half note chord. Bass clef has a half note chord. Dynamics: *f*, *vol.*, *sva*.
- System 9:** Treble clef has a half note chord. Bass clef has a half note chord. Dynamics: *f*, *vol.*, *sva*.
- System 10:** Treble clef has a half note chord. Bass clef has a half note chord. Dynamics: *f*, *vol.*, *sva*.

rit . . . . . ,  $\text{♩} = 120$  Faster

rit . . . . . ,  $\text{♩} = 120$  Faster

Ped. I + Soft Ped. stay down

rit . . . . .

hold Pedals down through following reading

FIRST READING:

MALAYSIA

CIRCUIT

Ong Loong Sheng, a 24-year-old trade unionist, was arrested on May 16, 1967 and detained without trial under the provisions of Malaysia's Internal Security Act, which allows the government to detain people for two years at a time without trial, and to renew the detention order as many times as it likes.

Although Mr. Ong was being held for allegedly posing a threat to Malaysia's national security, Amnesty International was concerned because his detention continued for several years despite the fact the Malaysian government never publicly presented evidence of any description which suggested that Mr. Ong posed a threat to national security, or that he used or advocated violence at any time.

VARIATION I (music to follow FIRST READING)

*starkly, plaintively*  
d=60 *a tempo*

*mf* *freely* *rit...* *p*

*poco Ped.* *Ped.* \*

*a tempo, lightly*

*pp* *5* *4* *3* *2* *1* *p*

*mf* *Ped.* \*

*rit...* *p* *pp*



SECOND READING:

URUGUAY

Brenda Inez Rovetta Dobinsky was a student of education at the time of her arrest on February 19, 1979. She was charged with 'Attack on the Constitution' at the level of conspiracy, and also with false documentation. She was married to Antonio Morelli, a Uruguayan political prisoner, who was released in 1978, before Brenda herself was arrested.

As a result of the above charges, Brenda was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment and was reported to have been brutally tortured.

# VARIATION II (music to follow SECOND READING)

$\text{♩} = 44$  Slowly Pounding  
with intensity

The musical score consists of three systems of piano and bass staves. The first system includes the tempo marking  $\text{♩} = 44$  and the instruction "Slowly Pounding with intensity". The piano staff features a series of chords with sharp signs, and the bass staff has notes with 'x' marks. Performance instructions include "stomp L. foot", "stomp R. foot", "slap left leg", and "biting". The second system continues with "slap right leg" and "gva" markings. The third system is marked "(gva)" and features a melodic line in the piano staff with accents and a bass line with notes and 'x' marks. A dashed line separates the second and third systems.

THIRD READING:

URUGUAY

Mario Julio Baffico was arrested on March 8th, 1976, and sentenced to nine years' imprisonment under the Law of National Security, which placed civilians convicted of political offenses under military justice. He was charged with 'Subversive Association,' allegedly because of his membership in the banned Uruguay Communist Party.

At the time of his arrest, Mario was married -- with two small children.

*playfully, ad lib.*

**VARIATION III** (music to follow Third Reading)

pp

quickly  $\text{♩} = 132$

*gva* --- *loco*

mf

Ped. \*

*freely*

*gva* ---

mf

dim.

Ped. stays

\*

*a tempo*  
(somewhat humorously)

p

mf

p

(no Ped.)

*white-note gliss.*

*white-note gliss.*

*gva* --- *loco*

*Poco Ped.*

*gva* --- *loco*

*Poco Ped.*

Ped. \*

*gva* ---

*gva* ---

*sim.*

*pp*

*sadly*

*c. alla*

*#c. alla*

Ped. *gva* stays

(Ped. stays)

FOURTH READING:

SOUTH KOREA

Lee Shim-bom, a law student at Seoul National University in the Republic of Korea, was arrested in June 1980, and sentenced by a military court to nine years' imprisonment for organizing student demonstrations.

Taken to prison, he was in great pain, attributed to the beatings inflicted upon him during interrogation. He was said to be unable to move his neck and one arm.

The authorities, however, denied him medical treatment on the grounds that the prison did not have the necessary facilities.



## VARIATION II (music to accompany Fifth Reading)

READER: APPEAL FROM A PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE IN A SOVIET PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL --  
Nizametdin Akhmetov is a prisoner of conscience held against his will in a special psychiatric hospital in Soviet Central Asia.

Akhmetov's case first came to light in 1979 when a note he had written with another prisoner was discovered in a cargo of lumber exported from Central Siberia to the Federal Republic of Germany.

Called "People We Need Your Help!" the note asked for international support for Soviet political prisoners.

Since then, Amnesty International has been able to piece together a more detailed history of Nizametdin Akhmetov's case.

Now in his thirties, he has spent over 15 years as a prisoner in psychiatric confinement and in the camps and prisons of the country's corrective labor system.

Akhmetov was first arrested in the 1960s, apparently on a criminal charge, and then given a fresh

sentence of at least 10 years' imprisonment for conducting "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" in conversations with other prisoners in the labor camp.

accel . . . . .

(cresc.)

Handwritten musical score for the first system. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music consists of eighth-note chords and single notes. There are slurs and dynamic markings. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb).

There is no evidence that Nizametdin Akhmetov had used or advocated violence in the activities that led to his arrest, nor is this implied by the charge of "circulating anti-Soviet slander" brought against him. Yet, though there was no

quickly

Soft Ped. off

rit . . . . .

Handwritten musical score for the second system. It continues with eighth-note chords and single notes. A 'Soft Ped. off' instruction is written above the first staff. A 'rit' instruction is written above the second staff. The key signature remains two flats.

indication that he was dangerous to himself or to others, a court ordered him confined against his will for an indefinite period to a special psychiatric hospital.

Very Angrily

Ped.

Handwritten musical score for the third system. The music is more complex, featuring dense chords and a tremolo effect. A 'Ped.' instruction is written below the first staff. The key signature changes to one flat (Bb).

forceful gliss. on lowest strings inside PNO.

Ped.

Handwritten musical score for the fourth system. It features a long, sweeping line across the staves, likely representing a glissando. The instruction 'forceful gliss. on lowest strings inside PNO.' is written above the line. A 'Ped.' instruction is written below the line.

READER resumes reading (next page)

hold through reading →



(play ↓ during reading below)

mute w/RH inside PNO. ("Let my People Go" rhythm)

pp unobtrusively, ad lib., vary rhythm  
+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + etc.

8 ↓  
Ped.

READER: Nizametdin Akhmetov was sent to Alma-Ata special psychiatric hospital in Kazakhstan, where it is believed he now remains. Amnesty International has frequently reported on the difficulties facing prisoners of conscience in psychiatric hospitals where they are held virtually incommunicado, and so are particularly at risk of cruel treatment.

These psychiatric hospitals are designed by law for the criminally insane who represent a "special danger to society" and, as such, are maximum security institutions where inmates are held under close surveillance, mostly in locked wards. Prisoners of conscience, and others confined there, are allowed visits only with close relatives, and then solely at the doctors' discretion.

They have no rights to correspondence, and may receive paper and pencil only with the permission of the doctors. All their letters are censored.

Amnesty International knows of numerous prisoners of conscience who have been punished with drug treatment, or beatings, after they were caught keeping a diary of their confinement, or trying to smuggle letters out of the hospital.

Soviet law, however, offers inmates of psychiatric hospitals no formal procedure to lodge complaints about their treatment.



another READER: (This READER should be a young man, perhaps dressed as a prisoner. He portrays Nizametdin Akhmetov.)

N.A.: I am afraid to write to you, my friend. I fear that you may read my letter like a letter from a madhouse... but I have no-one else I could write to, to whom I could express my most basic human need. But I fear even more that they will use the extra strong drugs on me and turn me into an idiot, who will not even be able to die with his senses intact.

So listen to your friend --

tap on PNO lid above keyboard

*gva*-----  
e e e e e

tap - vary location

*gva*-----  
e e e e e

*p* o o o o o

o o o o o

alternate patterns - vary rhythms

Ped.

N.A.: I am in a very bad way, my friend.  
 Never have I suffered so much,  
 never was my situation so hopeless.  
 I have dropped out of society,  
 from the scope of its laws.  
 I am absolutely without rights,  
 depersonalized,  
 indeed dehumanized.

Of course I am not ill.  
 Yet I am in an institution which has  
 all the means of making me ill.  
 This is no exaggeration:  
 psychiatry now has reached the limits  
 reached by physics when it split the  
 uranium nucleus.

It is not just this one man with the  
 white coat over his uniform whom I  
 have to face -- he has the entire  
 State behind him.

There is no doubt I am being ground to pieces.

It is horrible --  
 an unbearable continuous torment,  
 this so-called 'treatment'.

The medicines they feed and inject me with  
 Satan would have loved to buy for his Hell.

Such suffering I have never known.

And I am afraid of not holding out.  
 My will power is not unlimited.

$\text{♩} = 72$  *Somberly*

*pp*

*Ped. I + Soft Ped. stay down*

5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5

8va --- 5 --- 5 --- 7 loco

*Slightly Faster*  
 $\text{♩} = 80$  *Rhythmically*

*Soft Ped. off*

N.A.: The worst thing that can happen to a person  
 may happen to me.  
 In any case,  
 whether I die or whether they drive me mad,  
 that will be the end.

The end of a human being.

Even if it does not happen in a human way,  
 as with human beings,  
 it will happen to a human being --  
 that's what I wanted to stress.

And I would like to be spoken of,  
 and to be remembered,  
 as a human being.

*mp*

Slightly Faster  
♩ = 88

biting

Slightly Faster  
♩ = 100

*f*

8 ↓

106

white-note gliss.

ALL READERS:

*f*

Let my peo-ple go -----

white-note gliss.

READERS

Let my peo-ple go ----- Op - pressed so hard they could not stand -----



ALL

READERS: And I would like to be spoken of

(overlapping)

And I would like to be spoken of

And I would like to be spoken of

And I would like to be spoken of



and to be remembered

and to be remembered

and to be remembered

and to be remembered

as a human being

as a human being

as a



human being  
as a human being

[READERS drop scores to floor]

| [Cross wrists,  
| raise arms to eye level,  
| lower eyes]

PIANISTS:

| [Cross wrists,  
| raise arms to eye level,  
| lower eyes]